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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, August 18, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Household Questions." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

My morning mail is just like a big surprise party. I never know what questions are going to greet me when I open an envelope. For example, yesterday the first question was about rubber goods, several others were about canning, one was from a lady whose new towels were wearing out very mysteriously and still another -- But let's start in and answer these questions instead of talking about them.

Here's the first letter. It begins: "Dear Aunt Sammy: I wonder if you would give a little advice to a busy mother. One of the worries of my existence is the elastic in my youngsters' clothes. Almost every time the children's small bloomers, rompers and pajamas come back from the laundry, the elastic has stretched out and has to be replaced. What causes rubber to wear out this way? Is it poor quality or poor treatment?"

Another friend complains that she spends too much of her clothing money buying new elastic girdles and corselettes. "But just as sure as I wash them, Aunt Sammy, these rubber things begin to stretch out of shape and I have to buy new ones."

Well, I happen to know a few little secrets about rubber goods. Whether they are elastic girdles or bathing caps, raincoats or overshoes, rubber gloves or rubber aprons--they all require special care. You can't treat rubber fabrics as you can cotton or linen, for example. They deteriorate rapidly under certain conditions. But if they are of good material to begin with and if you treat them well, they'll give you good service.

The point to remember is that intense heat is the enemy of rubber; it makes it soft and gumlike. Did you ever notice that raincoats and overshoes dried in a hot place tend to wear out quickly? Rubber aprons which come in contact with the hot stove suffer the same fate. A plunge into hot suds has ruined many an elastic garment. Hot water like any other heat weakens the rubber.

So the safe rule for laundering is: Wash rubber materials of all kinds in cool water and dry them slowly at room temperature. Never iron rubber fabrics.

What's the safe way to wash an elastic girdle or corselette? Lay it flat on the table. Prepare a heavy lukewarm suds and scrub the article with a soft brush until it is clean. To rinse it, sponge with clear cool water or immerse it in the tub or washbowl. Squeeze but don't wring or twist it to remove the water. Fold it in a towel and pat it until the towel takes up all the excess moisture. Dry it in a cool airy place.

This method of washing holds good for rubberized raincoats also.

As for the elastic in children's clothes that takes up so much of busy mothers' time, you can look after that in two different ways. First, be careful about the laundering. When small bloomers or rompers are very dirty, scrub the badly soiled spots with warm suds, but be careful not to get the elastic in very hot water.

A clever mother I know takes the pieces of elastic out of her little girl's bloomers before she sends the bloomers to the laundry. She cuts the strips just the right length, sews each end to prevent raveling, and then fastens a hook at one end and an eye at the other. In this way, she can slip these pieces of elastic out when the garment is soiled, and easily fasten them back in place when it is clean.

Here are a couple of other hints about rubber. First, never use alcohol, gasoline, benzine, chloroform or turpentine on rubber goods. Second, remember that rubber articles tear easily. That's why you use a soft brush when you are washing them. And that's why you hang them on hangers rather than hooks.

So much for the question about rubber and elastic.

Now get on your detective cap and see if you can help me solve the mystery of the linen towels. A homemaker in a nearby city wrote me some time ago that her new linen towels, used only a few times, were wearing out from some unknown cause. They often came home from the laundry with small holes in them, holes that looked like cuts. Had I any idea of the cause? The other day another lady asked me the very same question.

What do you think? Personally I suspect the man of the house-- or rather his razor, but not the laundry. No matter how carefully a man may dry a razor blade, he's likely to cut a thread or two in a towel. This does almost as much injury as a clean cut, for the weakened thread will wear through shortly and leave a small hole. In fact, this towel damage is so common that many hotels furnish their patrons with special cloths for their razor blades.

While we're on this subject of saving your household linens from little things that may ruin them, I'd like to mention that bread knives and carving knives frequently cause trouble, if you use them without a bread board on the table cloth. Do you find it hard to believe that anyone would cut bread on the table cloth? So do I, but I've seen it done several times.

Here's a point about saving sheets. Uncovered bed springs and protruding nails, tacks or screws may injure your good sheets.

Of course, you know that you save money and make your household linen last much longer if you always mend the tears, even the very small ones, before you send the linen to the laundry.

Now here's a letter from a young housekeeper, who wants to know how to wash quilts or comforters. I always think warm late summer days are an ideal time to launder the quilts that have come back from camp or those that missed cleaning in the spring.

A generous suds of pure soap, a little ammonia and warm water will help soak out the dirt. (Soak about half an hour.) Then, sousing and squeezing in other fresh suds will remove the rest of the dirt. Never rub or wring a quilt. That may make the filling lumpy. For rinsing, use two waters of the same temperature as the suds. Hang the quilt dripping outside in the shade to dry, spreading it between two lines and shaking it often. When it is partly dry, beat it very lightly with a rattan carpet beater to fluff up the filling.

You can wash cotton, wool and down quilts this way. Those with silk or sateen covers look better if they are pressed with a warm iron.

After our chat on sandwiches last week a request came in for an attractive spread for sandwiches for a summer tea party. The color scheme planned for the party is green - an attractive cool color for summer. Did you ever try lime butter sandwiches? It is just the right color and it's delicious and different in flavor.

Have you a pencil handy? Then, here are the ingredients to take down for making a lime butter spread for sandwiches.

1/4 cup of butter
3 tablespoons of grated rind of limes
1/8 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of lime juice

I'll repeat those four ingredients. (Repeat.)

Cream the butter, and the grated rind of the limes. Then add the salt and the lime juice. Mix well, and use as a sandwich spread. For tea sandwiches, cut thin slices of white bread in fancy shapes with a cooky cutter and spread them with this lime butter. Open-faced sandwiches, in which only one slice of bread is used and the lime butter side is up, are attractive. Or simply spread the butter between thinly sliced bread.

Tomorrow, let's have a serious discussion of jellied dishes.

